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MESSAGE AND MELODY

RICHARD BURTON

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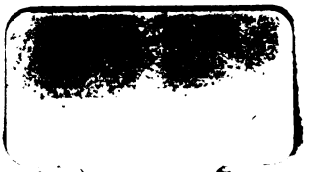

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From her admiring friend
Richard Burton
April, 1903

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DESSAGE AND ELODY

A Book of Verse

RICHARD BURTON

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MESSAGE AND MELODY

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SONG OF THE UNSUCCESSFUL

E are the toilers from whom God barred
The gifts that are good to hold.
We meant full well and we tried full hard,
And our failures were manifold.

And we are the clan of those whose kin
Were a millstone dragging them down.
Yea, we had to sweat for our brother's sin,
And lose the victor's crown.

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The seeming-able, who all but scored,
From their teeming tribe we come:
What was there wrong with us, O Lord,
That our lives were dark and dumb?

The men ten-talented, who still
Strangely missed of the goal,
Of them we are: it seems Thy will
To harrow some in soul.

We are the sinners, too, whose lust
Conquered the higher claims;
We sat us prone in the common dust,
And played at the devil's games.

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We are the hard-luck folk, who strove
  Zealously, but in vain:
We lost and lost, while our comrades throve,
  And still we lost again.

We are the doubles of those whose way
  Was festal with fruits and flowers;
Body and brain we were sound as they,
  But the prizes were not ours.

A mighty army our full ranks make,
  We shake the graves as we go;
The sudden stroke and the slow heartbreak,
  They both have brought us low.

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And while we are laying life's sword aside,
  Spent and dishonored and sad,
Our epitaph this, when once we have died:
  "The weak lie here, and the bad,"

We wonder if this can be really the close,
  Life's fever cooled by death's trance;
And we cry, though it seem to our dearest of foes,
  "God, give us another chance!"

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THE OLD SANTA FÉ TRAIL

IT wound through strange scarred hills, down canyons lone
Where wild things screamed, with winds for company;
Its milestones were the bones of pioneers.
Bronzed, haggard men, often with thirst a-moan,
Lashed on their beasts of burden toward the sea:
An epic quest it was of elder years,
For fabled gardens or for good, red gold
The trail men strove in iron days of old.

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To-day the steam-god thunders through the vast,
While dominant Saxons from the hurtling trains
Smile at the aliens, Mexic, Indian,
Who offer wares, keen-colored, like their past:
Dread dramas of immitigable plains
Rebuke the softness of the modern man;
No menace, now, the desert's mood of sand;
Still westward lies a green and golden land.

For at the magic touch of water, blooms
The wilderness, and where of yore the yoke
Tortured the toilers into dateless tombs,
Lo! brightsome fruits to feed a mighty folk.

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THE SOUL TO THE BODY

OLD mate, who long hast friended me
Through many a shift of rain and sun,
Now that the journey's well-nigh done,
The wear and tear of Time, I see,
Threatens a breach 'twixt me and thee.

For I am strong, as ne'er before,
While thou art waxen spent, and weak;
The touch of tears is on thy cheek,
Thy gait is limp, thy locks are hoar,
The latch is broken at thy door.

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Yet burns full bright my lamp within:
When it is quenched, what wilt thou do?
Dear comrade of the dusk and dew,
Thou fellow-wrestler against sin
In conflicts that God helped us win.

To say good-bye, I cannot bear;
By all the bonds of brotherhood,
If I encounter any good
Whither I go, 'tis thine to share,—
Boon friends together, Here or There!

So, till our parting shall take place,
I hold this sacred hope the while,
To light my sorrow with a smile:
That, when I soar and sing in space,
I may behold thee face to face!

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CONQUERORS

ALL times and climes may claim you,
O conquerors, mystic ones:
How may my poor tongue name you,
Dreamers 'neath many suns?

Makers of stately story,
Shapers of wood and stone;
Painters of colored glory,
Lovers of rhythmic tone;

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Weavers of fabrics wondrous,
To last through the changeful years;
Mages of harmonies thundrous,
Masters of mirth and tears;

Moulders of various beauty
To challenge all time, and rest
Secure in a sense of Duty
Done at an Art's behest;

Soldiers, who stood in battle
Rocks in a righteous cause;
Statesmen, who shook the rabble
Awake to the better laws;

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Men of inventing vision
  Who grapple with clod or cloud,
Till earth take a gleam elysian
  And matter must speak aloud;

Pleaders for stricken masses,
  Men of the speech that sings;
Prophets, whose light o'erpasses
  The thicket of sensate things,—

All climes and times may claim you,
  But one is your dream, your star:
Brothers-in-arms we name you,
  Builders of Good ye are.

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O conquerors, courage, aspire,
  Dream on, while ye kiss the rod;
One in your great desire,
  And one in the thought of God.

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SIDNEY LANIER

For a memorial meeting ten years after the poet's death

THE mirk hangs mute around a tomb.
O mildew blight that follows bloom!
O sad cessation of a song
Flute-sweet and like a trumpet strong!

What do I say? The dark's ashine
With soul-light that is surely thine.
What do I say? The silence breaks
In music that thy spirit makes.

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TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

DEAR ghost,— whose ruddy presence needs must fling
A ray of cheer among thy brother shades
In yon pale land of Sleep,— thy legacy
The years make richer.
For the fellowship
Of gallant souls who move down stirring ways
Of blithe adventure; for the moods of dream
That blossomed, at the conjuring call of Art,
Into Life's festal flowers of Romance;

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For lyric interludes of Song, whose sound
Comes in pathetic cadences; for words
Apt, rare, and full of wisdom, touching deeps
On deeps of human passion: for such gifts
Surely the guerdon is love's long renown.

But most, O Comrade ours, we owe to thee
For that brave gospel thou didst ever bring —
Not pulpit-wise, but sweet as speech of birds:
Courage and kindliness and joy-of-life
Even in its motley and keen-edged with pain;
High spirit against evil, and the laugh
Unbitter; and that indomitable belief
In brotherhood. 'Twould shame us, looking on
Thy struggle and thy triumph, should we play
The craven; yea, thy present happy peace
Heartens all laggards.

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Therefore seems it meet
To hail thee hero, fondly to recall
Thy valiant days, thy victory over doom,—
Child of delight and heir of loveliness,
Great friend, whose followers would fain be true.

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A BALLAD OF KINSMEN

APIA BAY wears a smooth, bright face
When the tropic winds are low,
But the harbor curve is a fearsome place
When the great winds rise and blow.

'Tis perilous for barks to ride
At anchor, when the surge
Comes thundering in from the sea outside
And foams on the rocky verge.

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From the Western States three ships were there,
  And one from the English Isle;
They came when the skies were bland and fair,
  And the ocean ways a-smile.

But the fierce storms smote them, till they tossed
  Like chips, 'twixt sea and sky;
And two of the ships of the States were lost,
  And the other drifted nigh

The coral reefs, to death; but saw
  The sturdy English ship
Out from the harbor's seething maw
  Toward open water slip.

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And sore they yearned to follow her
  Beyond the barrier foam,
To swap their coral sepulchre
  For the sea-leagues leading home;

But the ill-starred Trenton could not sail
  Nor steam; with beams aburst,
A helpless hulk before the gale,
  She staggered toward the Worst.

Yet, as the English, inch by inch,
  Away from the shallows drew,
The boys of the States, they did not flinch,
  For they cheered the other crew.

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Yea, never a soul showed craven then,
  Though their fate was plain to see;
The doomed men waved to the luckier men
  And gave them three times three.

Three times three, and the cheer rang high
  Above the wind and the wave,
As the English ship strained safely by,
  And the other on to her grave!

Oh, blood will tell, they were kinsmen all!
  Give the gallant lads a place
On the good high-seats of the heroes' hall
  To kindle our common race!

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THE CLAIM OF KINDRED

I AM not one, but many: murmuring through
My blood I seem to hear a blended cry,
Ancestral-strong, bidding me up and do
A million deeds before I come to die.

Some of the voices call like organ tones
Upon my soul for service that is meet;
Others unman me with melodious moans
Or evil invitations perilous-sweet.

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Some tell of high endeavor on the seas,
  Some, bugle-clear, declare that war is best;
Some lull me to a dream of summer ease
  In far-away, fair places where is rest.

Betwixt high heaven and hell the ample air
  Thrills with their pleadings, vibrates to their
    breath;
Deep in my heart I feel their vast despair,
  Their every hope, their game of life and death.

It is as though a countless company
  Drew a great circle round me, and did press
Their myriad claims nor would not let me be
  Until unto them all I answered, *Yes*.

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I am not one, but many: all the past
  Houses within my breast and summons me;
And only God shall speak the word at last
  To quell the storm and give the mastery,

Since thus, despite my cherished pride of will,
The passions of my kindred clasp me still!

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STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

NOT in the morning vigor, Lord, am I
Most sure of Thee, but when the day goes by
To evening and, all spent with work, my head
Is bowed, my limbs are laid upon my bed.
Lo! in my weariness is faith at length,
Even as children's weakness is their strength.

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THE MORNING SUMMONS

WHEN the mist is on the river, and the haze is on the hills,
And the promise of the springtime all the ample heaven fills;
When the shy things in the wood-haunts, and the hardy on the plains,
Catch up heart and feel a leaping life through winter-sluggish veins:

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Then the summons of the morning like a bugle
moves the blood,
Then the soul of man grows larger like a flower
from the bud;
For the hope of high Endeavor is a cordial half
divine,
And the banner cry of Onward! calls the lag-
gards into line.

There is glamour of the moonlight when the
stars rain peace below,
But the stir and smell of morning is a better
thing to know;
While the night is hushed and holden and trans-
pierced by dreamy song,
Lo! the dawn brings dew and fire and the rap-
ture of the strong.

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THE CITY OF LAISH

"Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, . . . quiet, and secure, and had no business with any men."

HAVE you read of the Orient people of
Laish in the olden time,
In the days when to battle was good
and to kill was held no crime?
How they dwelt at quiet, and had nor business
nor bicker with man,
Until they were smote by the sword in the grip
of the chieftains of Dan?

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The people of Dan came down and smote with
the edge of the sword
And builded a city therein, being led thereto of
the Lord;
And the name of the city was changed from
Laish, as they called it of yore,
To Dan of the Danites, who came and conquered
her people in war.

Since so it is written, we honor the host that the
victors became,
And righteously vanquished the foemen and
wreathéd their towers in flame;
Like a fiat of flame they descended, for so they
were guided of God,
And so was the future unfolded by sweeps of His
terrible rod.

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And yet in my heart there must harbor a feeling
of pity and pain
Because of the people so peaceful, who never
might mingle again
In streets of their love and their childhood, in
Laish, their home-city, that lay
As far from the worries of worldlings, as night
time is far from the day.

And it seems that the glory of battle, the gory
red signs of the same,
Are pitiful-poor when we set them beside the
lost calm of that name
All dwellers in cities must mention whenso they
would speak of a spot
Where men were at quiet and peaceful, and mur-
mur of war there was not.

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Will some day that is hope of the dreamer, some
place never chanted in song,
Show peace in its borders unbroken, where men
are both gentle and strong?
Shall the lamb e'er be couched with the lion?
Men ask it and look to the sky;
Christ came and his presence declared it, so the
dream may not utterly die.

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VISION

BY the boom of a bright, great sea,
Once, under a tropic sky,
In a scented night that was all alight
With stars a-throb on high,
Unsealed were the eyes of me:

For the earth beneath my tread
Shrank, and was like a smoke,
And the mighty deep and the skyey steep,
To their vasty truth I woke,
All the majesty o'erhead.

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With the universe I whirled,
  Of its length and breadth aware,
Man's petty hates and his passing fates
  Seemed less than empty air
  In the light of the larger world.

I looked, as a living soul,
  Into the eyes of God,
And I understood both bad and good
  In the scourging of His rod,
  And saw the ultimate goal.

Across abysms flung
  I heard the ocean's speech
And the pulsing stars explained the scars
  They suffered, each from each,
  When the universe was young.

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Oh, the splendid sense of space!
And the selfhood vanished quite
In a shoreless sphere where day and year,
Morning and noon and night
Are one before God's face!

Wrapt in that vision wide,
I seemed to briefly know
God's ancient plan for the weal of man;
Under Time's ebb and flow,
Eternity's sure tide.

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IN TIME OF WAR

OW who shall read the writing
That is writ upon the wall?
Shall the peoples cease from fighting?
Shall the good days come at all?

For the proud of earth do levy
Gold, that battles may be won,
And a burden direful heavy
Bends the father and the son.

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Though our own inviolate borders
  Widen out a myriad miles,
We are hailed as dread marauders
  In the ultimate far isles.

Though in Europe's mood of kindness
  Peace is mooted for a day,
Lo! there comes a mood of blindness,
  And red ravin has its way.

Yet the earth's stern law is spoken
  In the march of centuries,
That the weak for good are broken,
  That the strong must rule the seas.

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We may conquer in all gladness
If the cause be pure and high;
We can bear the passing sadness
For the blessing by and by.

When, to spread the benefactions
Of the world, the sword is swung,
We may glimpse through storm-wrapt factions
God's own lights in heaven hung.

Where, to lift a land's downtrodden,
Bullets sing and cannons boom,
There, though battle-fields be sodden,
Shall God's flowers freshly bloom.

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When the broad earth's blinded races
  Strive but for some heavenly stake,
And the higher life replaces
  The brief hell that weapons make;

Then, with sound of exaltations
  Shall the better times begin,
Then, ye captains of the nations,
  Shall the Prince of Peace come in.

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THE BACKGROUND GROUP

THE crowd huzzas, the music madly plays;
'Tis meet, for, lo! it is the day of days.
The home-returning heroes come: a cry
Of welcome should be lifted to the sky
And flowers strew the people-trampled ways.

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The drums beat martially; with rhythmic beat
The steps resound along the gaping street.
  Hark, what acclaims! And how the folk do
    press
  To see, to touch, maybe, the very dress
Of those who dared the death, when Life is
    sweet!

But stay! where joy is general, where the sound
Of jubilant voices rends the air around,
  Why is yon group so silent in its place,
  With war's impassioned image face to face?
Wherefore those eyes cast nunlike on the ground?

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Who are these hangers-back, these dark-robed
ones?
They are the mothers who are reft of sons;
The wives whose dearest lie all uncaressed
Afar, with vital stains on brow or breast;
The children orphaned at the mouths of guns.

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EXIT NIGHTINGALE

(Anton Nachtigall, aged 34, a shop foreman, shot himself dead yesterday. He was sick and discouraged.— *Morning Newspaper.*)

GHASTLY contrast, God's grim joke!
Here's a man who, on a morn,
Very weary, hopeless, spoke:
"I am out of work, and scorn,
Want and ugliness are mine."
So this creature, made divine
(So they tell us) simply shot
His weak brains out — there's your plot!

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Nothing in it, say you? Stale?
True, 'tis but a common tale,
But the story gives me pause
For a moment's space, because
This poor breaker of God's laws
Bore the name of — Nightingale!

Somewhere in the years behind,
When men's names were first assumed —
Tinker Tom or John the Smith,
Handier to travel with —
Somebody was this assigned:
Nightingale. . . . Belike there bloomed
On his cheek the badge of health
And he had, instead of wealth,
Music for his gift, could sing,
Play the fiddle, lead the folk
Down the jolly dancing-ring;

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Make them thus forget their yoke,
In some village . . . long ago.
Merry lad, who far and wide
Up and down the countryside
Piped before the people so!
Thus, the name bespoke the man.

Latterly there came a change
In this very pretty plan
And a name meant naught at all.
Taylors sat within the Hall,
Kings in hovels — passing strange!
Time's inexorable jest
Mocked the high and blurred the best.
So with Nightingale,— he fell
From his pristine grove and — well,
Found himself in songless hell.

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Heigho, how the world is run!
Morn of glory, night of shame,
Worms that crawl from out a bud.
Every day 'twixt sun and sun
Some poor devil's singing name
Is wiped out in city mud.

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CORONADO

ON the beach at Coronado curves the shore
in cresscent wise,
And the blue of sky and water merge
divinely to the eyes;
Dim, fair islands lift like phantoms from the bright
Pacific floor,
And the breakers fall but blandly where the sea-
gulls dip and soar.

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There a spell of scented languor seems to still the
pulse of pain,
And perpetual springtide hovers over land and
slumbrous main,
There the blooms are lush and brilliant, there
some great ship, wearing west,
Seems to pause as loath at leaving all a haven
holds of rest.

And the idler, lapped in pleasance, charmed to
dreams by sound and sight,
As he watches dawn or sunset or the sweeping
stars of night,
Lets his mind go groping backward to the
strenuous pioneers,
When the red-gold fever took them in the far,
untranquil years;

Digitized by Google

To the Spaniards with their visions — quick to
fancy were they then —
Of some vast and hoarded treasures; Coronado
and his men;
To the splendid quests and tumults, to the tor-
ments and defeats,
To the rovers by the rivers and the pirates in
their fleets.

But so fleckless are the heavens, and such peace
is found below,
In the sea-companioned gardens where the great
blooms wax and blow,
Such a slow and sweet siesta bring the magical
warm noons,
That all anguishes and ardors are unreal as
ancient runes.

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So it is — until a storm-wind rolls the billows up
the coast,
And the night is thick with portents, and the
keen air's clamoring host
Fills the vault — ah, then returning, trooping
back refreshed and strong,
Come the old-time, lost marauders, ruling men
with sword and song.

And they cry with clangorous voices when they
sight a timid sail,
And their drinking-bouts are mighty as the
hours to dawn go pale;
Royally do they foregather and their Presences
resume
All the potency of living, as they revel in the
gloom.

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But with day, behold the languor and the beauty
all restored,
Once again the waters gentle, once again divine
accord
'Twixt the earth and swooning heavens, while
the sand in crescent wise
Curves to meet the benediction of the Californian
skies.

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THE PROCESSION

"NOW let our womankind tend hearth and house,
Obey and love, receive, in turn, due love
Of husbands, brothers, sons who battle for
Their wants and welfare in the outer ways,
And so fulfil the Law. This sums the whole."

Thus spake Sir Oracle. Meanwhile, meseemed
Through mists of time I saw in rich array
Pass by a white procession, one by one:

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The swart-browed queen whose Eastern Sovereignty
Was large, but larger yet her passionate sway
Over two men who made the Western world,
Caesar and Antony, both at her feet.
And then, bright Helen, Menelaus' wife,
And Paris' leman in a golden day;
So fair that poets e'er since have joyed to sing
Her loveliness, which claimed its hecatombs
Of victims, Greeks and Trojans battailous.
Next, Magdalen, whose penitence is famed
And precious, and the Mary men revere,
Walking in sisterwise, with equal mien,
Save that the Mother's brow was full-content,
The Maiden's wistful. Then proud Joan of Arc,

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A peasant yet a princess, with a light
Fanatic yet divine within her eyes;
A martyr's eyes that look through flames to God!
The while the lips say: "Patience, 'tis for France."
And Sappho, fillet-bound about the head,
Chanting swift lyric lays beside the sea
Aegean blue,—lays soft yet strong withal,
Since still we hear, albeit brokenly.
Hypatia, too, whose spirit was not quenched
By mob-defiance nor untimely death,
Strode gravely sweet and calm; and Portia, she
That donned a mannish habit for the nonce
And plead with angel-tongue for Mercy's place
Along with formal justice. Shyly there
Came Sister Dorothea, half a Saint

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Yet all a woman, binding wounds and sores;
Her passing was a breath from the Command:
"Unto the least of these my brethren."—

These, yea, and many more filed by, until
The mist grew mythic and they faded out
Into the common light of day: anon,
Again I heard the little, piping voice
Make deposition as to woman's worth.

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WHEN THE DREAM COMES TRUE

I SHALL see far plainer than I do
Here and now, when what I dream is come:
They that love me not, my slips shall rue,
Those I love not, deeming dull and dumb,
I shall wake to find full fellowsome,
When my dream comes true.

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Lightest words that worked for me and you
  Barriers that clomb to mountain heights;
Little deeds that into great wrongs grew,
  All for lack of flashing heaven-lights,
Shall be smoothed and shapened all to rights,
  When my dream comes true.

It may even be the love I woo
  Blindly now, my vision choked with tears,
Then shall understand me, know how true
  Was the heart struck voiceless through its fears;
Ah! a moment shall make sweet the years,
  When my dream comes true!

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POEMS OF MUSIC

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I.

AN OLD SONG

HERE'S a ballad of quaint love-longing
That often I yearn to hear,
For it sets the memories thronging
And wakens a by-gone year.

The words were but simple and pretty,
With a tender final fall,
Yet I swear that this old-time ditty
Still holds my heart in thrall.

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It was sung by a girl whose fashion
  Can never grow stale nor old;
But she and her young soul's passion
  Lie quiet in graveyard mould.

It was not the music, I fancy,
  Nor the story — but just the way
She sang, and the necromancy
  Wrought by a dear, dead day.

At times they will play it to me
  Now — but my heart sinks low;
It isn't the same that drew me
  There in the long ago.

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I miss the meaning; 'tis broken—
  The spell of singer and song;
I sigh for a vanished token,
  For a magic of yore I long;

For the place where the voice would waver
  And a sob rise up in the throat,
For the little pathetic quaver
  That wasn't on any note!

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II.

SECOND FIDDLE

UST behind the first fiddle he bends
To his bow, as a slave to the rod;
All his soul to the music he lends,
All his eyes to the leader, his god.

His skill is not blaring, but sure;
Mark his bowing, the rhythmic accord
Of his motions, the sound, crystal-pure,
That he lures from the violin's board.

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The crowd never look at his face;
He is one of the sixty who try
With wood-wind or brass to displace
The world by a dream from the sky.

Not his, like the master of strings,
To step forth superbly alone
And play a Cremona that sings
With heavenliest tone upon tone.

No soloist he, but a part
In the mighty ensemble that soars
In the regions divine of an art
Where man but aspires and adores.

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His joy is the gladness of those
  Who feel they are helping the whole;
Less fluent the harmony flows
  If an instrument flag, if a soul

Unfaithful should be to the beat
  Of the baton that bids him be true;
And the music is ofttimes so sweet,
  Small matter what makes it, or who.

And haply — who knows? — in the day
  When the ultimate piece is rehearsed,
Shall come his Great Moment to play,
  And the fiddle called second, be first.

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III.

STREET MUSIC

how the dance-tune trips it through the street,
Making steps rhythmic, blood the lustier beat!
Throwing a thought of love and holiday
Into the midst of Trade's most prosy way.

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Look yonder: it is but an aged crone
Crouched in a corner, wrinkled and alone,
Half-dazed, who feebly grinds an organ small,
Craving scant pence and sun — and that is all.

As soon I'd think to hear a gargoyle sing,
A death-mask speak a lyric word of spring,
As yonder hag fill all the drowsy air
With music making Life alert and fair.

* * * * * *

Yet hark, again the strain, the waltz-tune glad,
The sudden rapture, the abandon mad,
From a bleared woman, sick and old and sad!

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IV.

IN A THEATRE

IDDLE-SOUNDS in a foul, pent place;
Seams of sin on every face

Uplooking there from the seats below,
Foul-mouthed men and a shameless show.

A young girl stepping upon the stage;
The singing of songs is half her wage,

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Selling her soul the other half;
They greet her now with a jeering laugh.

A face that somehow hints of good,
Though stamped with all of the demonhood

That comes to souls that God made white
Given over to shame and night.

And lo! she sings. The song that broke
Her lips had naught of jibe or joke.

'Twas "Annie Laurie," and her face
Lost, the while, its old disgrace,

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Her voice grew soft and sweet and clear;
She sang as though the words were dear.

Till the angel woke in every man,
And memories stirred as memories can

Though seeming dead for long, wrong years;
Memories stirred and so did tears.

The reeking air turned meadow-sweet,
And daisies danced beneath their feet,

While each man walked with his love or bride
In the morning-break on the mountain-side.

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She ceased. No sound of plaudits came
From the foul-mouthed men in the place of shame.

But one man sobbed and the rest were still;
And the God above had worked his will.

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V.

AT THE SYMPHONY

I SIT and listen and love it all,
Here by the orchestra.
The violins, how they plead and call,
Taking the voice of her!

The brasses brave have a martial tone,
The cymbals clash in strife:
The grave bassoons half muse, half moan,
Chanting the deeps of life.

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The 'cellos brood and the flutes rise clear
  In a cry that soars and sings;
The rippling harps ensnare mine ear
  With a vibrant rush of wings.

O sweet with words no lips may dare,
  This speech of the orchestra!
And yet — that burst from the wood-wind there —
  Was it weal or woe of her?

Digitized by Google

VI.

VIOLIN AND VIOLA

AT times, when, with an anguish all too keen,
The violin doth tensely tell of grief,
Tugging at heart-strings till the tale, I ween,
Is over-cruel, calls for some relief:
I joy to hear, like cooings of lost doves,
The grave viola plaining of old loves.

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VII.

A WALTZ THOUGHT

(To Eduard Strauss)

WHEN a man's prime passion, for years on years,
Is giving birth to bright waltz airs,
That are quick with life and love that cheers,
And sweet as the bloom that the springtide wears;

'Tis a fancy sad and strange withal,
To dream he must lie in a tomb some day
And hear no longer the soft clear call
Of music, once that he heard alway.

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For I almost deem he would keep awake,
  And list to the song of the mountain stream,
Would hark to the sound that the treetops make,
  Or the voice that follows the lightning's gleam;

Would seize all melodies Nature knows,
  To fit the passion that haunts him still,
Till out of them all a wild strain grows
  Graced and fashioned to suit his will;

Would down in his grave our pulses stir,—
  Fancy him there in the chilly vaults,
Singing e'en in his sepulchre,
  Subtly shaping his witching waltz!

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VIII.

A CATCH

ALONG comes Love
In the semblance of a boy,
And he rings a little bell,
And he sings a little song:
Lo, the change thereof!
Heaven after hell,
Beauty healing wrong,
And grief turned joy!

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IX.

A PIANIST

HIS stormy hands went down the crashing keys,
Making a tumult wild of billowy sound;
Fear roused his head, dark Passion too was there,
Twin mighty presences that shook the air.

But sweet the resolution: wind-swept seas
Sank magically, and up from Life's profound
Stole shining Peace that spread from shore to shore,
Till heaven seemed nigh and Love was evermore.

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X.

DOVE NOTES

THE soft, strange note of the doves, to
what may we liken the sound,
As they flutter high at the eaves or flock
for food to the ground?
Their murmurings shy, remote, like a lost year's
memory seem,
Like melody heard under water, or music dimmed
by a dream.

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SEA MOODS

HERE is music free in the waves of the sea,
Rejoicing by all his coasts:
But the salt thereof is his agony
O'er the wrecks and the buried hosts.

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SEA RHAPSODY

I.

BY day, the tremble of the boat,
As the engine throbs like a human heart;
The tang of the untainted air, salt, free,
Roaming long leagues of brine;
The tidal lift and the slow swing, now the craft buries her nose in the billows;
The sky of central blue, tapering down to misty opal at the sea line,
And all around, the unsteady sapphire of the ocean.

Digitized by Google

II.

At night, snug in the cabin, cheerful with lamps,
With food and drink and the talk of cronies:
Hard by, the friendly lights of the ships;
Far above, aloof, the homeless flicker of stars
In their high, impenetrable places.

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III.

Then, sleep, midst the rock of the waves,
To dream of dear ones distant on land,
With a sense of lesion from all the ways of earth,
A return to savage, sane realities:
The tameless revels of strange, marine creatures;
The hoarse voices of winds and waters,
The hidden treasures of the deep,
Wide-scattered, inestimable, not to be named.
The face of tan, the boy's heart,
The lost yet inextinguishable gust of youth, exultant once more.

Digitized by Google

IV.

Old Earth, the mother, sends forth her sons
  To adventure with the ancient, hoar, gammer sea;
Ever hereafter, as they come back and walk
  The dusty, fevered streets, and bargain in the marts,
And sicken with heat and the sight of men,
Will they carry at heart a cool, quieting thought,
And yearn betimes for the ocean's open roads,
For the rigors and raptures of the sailor life,
The footless trail, the horizon's lovely lure, the sting and lull
Of elemental water wastes,
Restless, that yet bring rest.

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A MARSH MESSAGE

In Memoriam: Olivia Susan Clemens

THE melancholy marshes brood
In all their rich monotony:
Beyond them, in a twilight mood,
The more than melancholy sea.

A seemly spot for news of death:
The message comes, with tidal pain:
The ancient faring-forth of breath,
The young laid low, the lovely slain.

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Her life was one that, river-sweet,
O'er sunny uplands ran,— but then
Inexorably plunged to meet
The under waves that wait for men,

The lethal waters, salt and still,
Wherever mystery bides; the Vast
Whose voice is mystic, and whose will
Is stronger than our will at last.

* * * * *

The marsh is troubled in its dream
By a faint, tremulous stir of air:
Is it the passing of the stream,
The young fresh soul that was so fair?

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LULLABIES

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I.

AT FIRST

BABY, the legends say
Angels are here,
Keeping all harm away
That would come near.
There is a warmer thing
Guarding thee, babyling,
Than any angel-wing:
It is my love so deep;
Then sleep, child, sleep.

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Baby, I cannot tell
    How strangely fair
Are tower and citadel
    That glisten there
In the sleep-country wide;
    Wonders on every side
    Wait thee and there abide:
    Marvels by wood and stream:
    So dream, child, dream.

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Baby, much-travelled one,
When thou hast seen
Dawn, noon and set of sun
In sleep-lands green,
Haply thou wilt be fain
With all thy might and main
Homeward to turn again.
Is't so? For home's sweet sake,
Then wake, child, wake!

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II.

AT LAST

A WITHERED face with great brown eyes
That gazed through unwept tears;
A smile on the mouth in motherwise,
And tender, full of years.

Stretched on the sand a man, not old,
With features warped by sin,
And bad, albeit now death-cold,
All passion dead within.

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But ever the mother sat above
  Her son and rocked and sang,
As though deep stirred by baby-love,
  While thus her cracked voice rang:

"Sun-gold thy hair, darling,
Sleep, thou art fair, darling,
Shut down thy pretty eyes;
Father is on the sea,
Nobody's by but me,
Sleep, for the waters rise."

So sang the fish-wife, bending o'er
  Her boy, just drowned and dead;
Crazed in her mind, the days of yore
  Kept revel in her head.

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"When thou art old, darling,
Grown brave and bold, darling,
Then thou shalt have a wife;
Now thou art only mine,
Little and fair and fine,
Helpless in all thy life."

The man lay still, and the sullen look
Was ever on his face;
His deeds read dark in the judgment book;
His lot had been disgrace.

But the mother hugged the body wet,
Gray-haired, and dazed in brain.
As I walked away she was singing yet,
Over and o'er again:

Digitized by Google

"'Tis time to wake, darling,
See! light will break, darling,
Yonder across the quay;
Come, wee one, kiss me now,
Soft on my cheek and brow;
Wake for the love of me,
My boy, my joy,—
For the love of me,—for me!"

Digitized by Google

III.

SLIPPER TIME

' IS a homely time of ease and rest,
When the day dies out in the ruddy west
And the lamps are lit and the hearth fire leaps,
And the children go to their early sleeps;

When the dear ones talk of their doings small
And a sense of peace is on them all,
For the cool, calm night must stretch between
To-morrow's toil and to-day's flushed scene;

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When memories throng and the word of cheer
Is sometimes nigh to the secret tear,
For the soul at lounge will range full far,
From the pit of shame to the highest star.

The sound of music perhaps is heard,
But the instrument or the uttered word
Alike are sweet, since love in both
Is immanent and nothing loath.

So the home folk feel, as the hours slip by,
That Life is kind and that every sigh
Is followed close by some pleasant thing,
That laughter follows on suffering.

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'Tis a shade-tree set in a desert space;
In a discord harsh 'tis a note of grace;
'Tis the harmony of the perfect rhyme,
This homely, human slipper time.

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NATURE PIECES

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I.

THE SONG OF THE OPEN

I LOVE a level reach of land,
That winds have room to turn in;
I love in open fields to stand
That hosts of flowers burn in.

I love far-stretching paths of sea
Of turbulence unended,
And salty smells, that make in me
A life that's new and splendid.

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I love full well the naked sky,
  Wind-swept and hale and cheerful;
For under her big voice can I
  Shake off my troubles tearful.

And so I turn, when so I may,
  From toil and moil of daytime,
To hurry to the field away,
  And dare to have a play-time!

Again returning, all my thought
  Is lightsomer and sweeter,
And songs upspring, though all unsought,
  In love's forgotten metre.

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II.

AUTUMN CORN

THE withered autumn shocks of corn
Are Indian braves, who stand a-row
With wind-blown hair and look forlorn,
And brood upon the long ago.
Sere is their dress, and sere their mind,
With tribe and totem far behind.

Digitized by Google

III.

QUAIL AND THRUSH

THE quail's staccato call from out the wood
Comes clear unto mine ear;
But in the thrush's note is mistihood,—
Meseems you hear
His message only with the brooding mind,
Blent in with memories, borne on last year's wind.

Digitized by Google

IV.

EARLY WINTER

BROWN grass, picked out with red of bushes, tones
Of silver on the fences; russet, bronze,
The leaves of oaks and beeches; mystic black
Where pools of water lie, and edged thereround
The ghostly glamour of the shallow ice.
Above, a gray-white monody of sky,
And all between the heaven and earth a mist
Of fine, fast-falling snow that makes a veil
Wherethrough you see a mystery, a blend
Of winter colors to a perfect whole
That lifts the heart with beauty, doth atone
For long-withholden loveliness of June.

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V.

THE FALL OF THE LEAVES

OWN they come by millions,
Pied and aspen things,
Dancing airy cotillons,
Drifting on wind-swept wings.
With a music delicate yet clear,
Thick they fall, in their painted cheer,
Down the alleys old of the outworn year.

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Gay-heart hopes and visions
  Mingled with their fall;
Memories of elysians
  Buoyed them one and all.
Faded, meek, and still they lie
Under foot, and the farer-by
Treads them in nor sees them die.

Peace! they have done their duty,
  Now is the time for rest.
Peace! they have shown us beauty;
  Now, on the mother-breast
They repose: their day was bright,
On the tremulous trees they had delight;
Now comes sleep and the soothe of night.

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VI.

AUTUMN SONG

KEEN west wind from the hills away,
A rustle of curled brown leaves,
A blazon of colors,—O Autumn day,
How Memory subtly weaves
Into your scents and leaf-lit fires
Hopes and dreamings and dead desires.

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VII.

THE HILLS OF HOME

AFTER the mighty levels of the West,
The far horizon and the open quest,—
Back to the land of mists and memories,
Hooded with trees and topped by dappled skies,
Back to the valleys, whence the sun upclomb
The hills of home!

Now let my dead youth have her way with me;
This is a dream-while; I am glad to be
Penned in by orchards, set about with pines,
Lured down long vistas that the soul divines;
The West anon,— boylike to-day I roam
The hills of home!

Digitized by Google

VIII.

THE PINE TREE

HE sombre pine is a Norseman grave
Brooding some saga old,
Calmly chanting a solemn stave,
Scorning the winter's cold.
There's a Norland soul in this ancient tree,
And he ne'er forgets his ancestry.

Digitized by Google

IX.

THE VALLEY

I HAVE seen a valley lying
Underneath the yellow moon,
When the winds had ceased their sighing,
And the trees were all a-swoon.

And the sound of rivers rushing
Filled the night, and made it seem
Like to angel-garments brushing
Through wide spaces in a dream.

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Then my soul has filled with gladness,
  Shy, withal, but tender-deep;
And the daytime with its madness
  Seemed afar, and put to sleep:

For the riddles past divining
  In the noontide press of men,
All grew plainer in the shining
  Of the sky's fair citizen.

Life turned easy, trust was stronger,
  Blossoms sprang from all my ills,
As I lingered long and longer
  In the silence of the hills:

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Till I loved the valley lying
  Underneath the yellow moon,
Where the winds had ceased their sighing,
  And the trees were all a-swoon.

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X.

THE BUGLER FROM THE PEAKS

WHAT is this cry that sudden seems to shake
The keen, still mountain æther wide awake,
Until the vast and candid snows of night
Sound vibrantly on every doming height?

Hark, how it swells! The very stars do hear!
This upper fastness reads the message clear;
Her ancient language Mother-nature speaks:
The bull-elk bugles midst the topmost peaks!

Digitized by Google

XI.

FALL FIELDS

THE sober-golden fields lie soaked in light,
Like a great rug with patterns interplight
Of tint and tone; God's ancient place, the sky,
Turns paler blue above such tapestry.

Digitized by Google

XII.

NATURE'S BOOK

THE tender green of willows by a stream
In springtime, or the impressionable pools
That duplicate the streaks of yellow sky
At sunset, give me food for many a dream,
Instruct me more than cunning of the schools,
Bidding me kindly live, and calmly die.

Digitized by Google

XIII.

INDIAN SUMMER

SECURE in full fruition doth she rest,
With mellow lights of golden afternoon
Touching the placid joy of brow and breast;
Thus to behold her is to hark a tune
Played chantwise, yet firm-founded upon peace,
And glad of all the stormy year's release
From passion's summer-world. So have I seen
In tranced November come a day more rare
Than any Spring could muster, ne'er to be
Forgotten. How unfathomably fair
Appears this tranquil creature unto me,
This woman ample-natured, Autumn's queen!

Digitized by Google

XIV.

THE BROKEN PROMISE

AFTER the crisp of fall,
There is beautiful summer weather:
In the air is a wondrous Call,
And tied things strain at their tether,
And creeping and flying things
Walk swift or essay their wings.

Then, a cold Word comes in the night,
Bringing a message of blight:
And the creeping things and the flying
(Ah, the myriad lives effaced,
And the pity of trust misplaced!)
At morn, are all dead or dying.

Digitized by Google

Man, in his knowledge, hath understood:
But the humbler folk of the earth and air
In their vast and vocal brotherhood
(They only petition for living-room)
Do fondly dream that the Spring has come,
Till their very blood beats frolicsome:
But they misinterpret a Semblance fair,
And a Broken Promise is their doom.

Digitized by Google

ON THE DEATH OF A MOTHER

A LITTLE maiden, her doll to her
Was love and daughter and comforter;
Her eyes, far better than speaking could,
Guessed and gossiped of motherhood.

One day they put at her breast her boy,
And she knew the splendid mother-joy.
After the agony, ah, the bliss
Summed in that sacred, birthright kiss!

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Now, the old mother who broods us all
Folds her fast, and she heeds the call;
Earth to earth, but she knows no fear,—
Mother to mother means dear to dear.

Digitized by Google

BEFORE A SHRINE

THREE lilies grew in a garden
That looked upon the sea;
These lilies white, they had a right
To be beloved of me.
I ask no man a pardon
That, all within my garden,
I loved those lilies three.

Three men came in my garden,
Three men from o'er the sea;
One black as night, one gold-bedight,
And one that looked at me,
And praised my growing garden:
I ask my God for pardon,
I loved him of the three.

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Strange things come out of the sea:
  I loved him well, ah me!
There came a wind that blights the kind
  Of flowers lilies be.
  Mary, Mother of charity,
Now I pray for pardon:
Here, within my garden,
  Sin came unto me;
  Mother, I call to thee;
Right the rue that came unto
  The lily-blooms and me!

Digitized by Google

THE DESERTED SCHOOL

THERE broods a pathos of a time long past
In every nook and every grass-grown way;
The fences lean as tired out at last,
That once pent in so many lads at play.

The doors gape open, but one harks in vain
For human voices or for hurrying feet;
The rusty weather-cock creaks out that rain
Or days uncloudy come, or snow and sleet.

Digitized by Google

The gables droop, the windows, staring-eyed,
Do seem to mock one pitying the place;
A thousand birds and flowers long have tried
To put upon the scene a summer face.

But spite of them, a silence wide and deep
Clings round the corners, sits on every stone:
It is a spot for lingering and sleep,
For guessing other fortunes than your own.

I people all the playground up and down
With rushing forms and sound of laughter high;
I watch the light of evening like a crown
Upon the walls, till pales the western sky.

Digitized by Google

I wonder how those sturdy limbs have fared
  That since have wandered far as east and west;
I wonder who from sorrows have been spared,
  I strive to read the hearts that have been blest;

And so my love would follow, one by one,
  The life of each, and all its changes know —
Until the faces fade, as did the sun
  That lit the players in the long-ago.

And I am left a solitary, all
  My youth gone from me, in a daze to take
Mid-manhood's burden up, until I fall
  Upon the beaten highway of Heartbreak.

Digitized by Google

THE WORLD ASLEEP

WAKING by night, a great and tender thought
Rolled in upon my soul; I seemed to see
Millions of men of high and low degree,
Women and children small,—all overwrought
With labor, sin or weakness, or distraught
Through passion's power,—in deep tranquillity,
With placid breasts and breath that issued free,
As if they lay at peace, regretting naught.

Digitized by Google

And O it was a wonderful mild sight,
Those helpless forms of all God's creatures there,
Worldlings and saints, alike as dove and dove,
Resuming innocence and lost delight,
All quieted and with sleep's magic fair,
One in the Father's watch and ward of love.

Digitized by Google

THE UNFORGOTTEN

WHENE'ER I see, hurrying through worldly ways,
Those who forget the friends they once have known,
Who seemed like very kinsmen of their own
For fond affection: merged now in the haze
That broods o'er the Eternal; The old days
Faint too and far, like fairy tales outflown
From rooms of childhood,— I must inly moan
That Time such numbing power upon us lays.

Digitized by Google

As if the Past were not a playground, where
The unforgotten mates slip to and fro
In games whose dimness makes them doubly
fair,
The heart's best comradery, when all is said;
As if less lovely were the Long Ago,
Or men could lose their dearness, being dead.

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"WORDS, WORDS, WORDS"

THE melancholy Prince did surely err:
Each several word is as a vital sign
That here some man has tasted Life's rich wine,
Been thrall to ill, been Beauty's worshipper,
Or mayhap felt the immemorial stir
Of passion. Words are symbols that divine
The more than mortal that is subtly thine;
They stand for all the dreams that ever were.
They have their regal fortunes, and their falls
Like Lucifer from heaven; tragic days
Are theirs, and love's soft interludes
Of music lyric-sweet along the ways;
At whiles, some nether hell their sound recalls;
Yet o'er supernal heights their meaning broods.

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A FORECAST

THROUGH all the wood the rain drops ceaselessly
And every whiff of air shakes down on me
Dank hints of storm, dark auguries of skies
Unchanged and cheerless: so, in hopeless wise
I trudge, until a gleam of light ahead
Reveals the open, makes my soul less dead.
Into the day I step,—thou foolish one,
The rain has long been o'er, behold the sun!
The forest did but lie, the storm is done.

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Love, it may be that in some sunlit land
Beyond the present troubling, now you stand
And smile most tenderly, because I dream
The rain is falling and, lead-hearted, deem
No hope can pierce the limitless gray shore:
Maybe, beyond 'tis shining evermore,
And you await me with the old-time grace,
The same dear eyes, the same divine dear face,
One with the sun in making glad the place.

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SOUND IN SILENCE

WALKING when all the ways seemed wondrous still,
I suddenly was ware it was not so:
The silence was a web of sound, below,
Above, that did the earth and heavens fill.
The wood-hid thrush, the field-sparrow's sliding trill,
The dominant insistence of the crow,
The shrill of crickets and the voiceful flow
Where curve the river currents down the hill,
The wind amidst the pines, the far-off calls
Of boys at play, the hayers at their task
With creaking carts, the lowing cows — they all
Were present, like the face behind the mask.
The silence swarmed with noises, nay, was blent
With many musics, for my solacement.

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PENELOPE'S LOVER

I READ how once Ulysses, far from home,
Daunting all dangers o'er the wine-dark sea,
Came to the island where the Sirens be
Who waft sweet song athwart the ocean's foam.
And there, beneath the blue sky's ample dome,
For fear those luring strains they might not flee,
His comrades bound him to the mast, that he
Might 'scape the enchantment fierce, nor isleward roam.

And as I read, I wish the story ran,
That in the hero's breast love beat so strong
No Siren's voice, no sound of soothing song,
Could tempt him, on his ship, to change his plan,
And slack the oar that should, by sun or star,
Dip towards Penelope and Ithaca.

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WALL STREET

STRAIT river, with its hoarse and feverous flood
Of money-makers; on that turbulent tide
Hourly men sink, or bring their argosies
To unhoped havens. On that tiny stage
The drama of the dollar is played out
In tragic throes that shake the land; there gold
Is God, the devotees are hollow-eyed.

A touch brings London; at a mystic word
The tropics tremble; while an upraised hand
Withers broad grain-fields lovely in the sun
A thousand leagues away.

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Meantime, the spire
Of Trinity, as set in satire there,
Points with insistent finger to the skies
Placid above this lust of loss-and-gain,
And underneath, the aisles of peace and prayer
Await the worshippers who still would place
Christ above Mammon, love before the world.

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PEACE OUT OF PAIN

S from some fruit, bitter in the beginning,
A rare, sweet draught is pressed, finds
strange release;
So, out of turmoil, pain and sorry sinning,
All mystically issues peace.

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DON'T DREAM, BUT DO!

IS an easy thing, if you want to know
How sweet the summer is, just to go
Down in the fields, or deep in the wood,
Or fain toward the swash of the sea.
For they all will teach you how heavenly good
Such wholesome places be.
If you seek the soul's warm summer, too,
Don't dream, but do!

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Don't sit at home with your brain-born book
And balance questions and pry and look
Askance at this, or wonder how
  That squares with some ancient doubt;
But get in touch with the throbbing Now,
  And let your heart go out
To your fellow-men who are spent and blue.
    Don't dream, but do!

Work in the world for the folk thereof;
With every deed that is done in love
Some criss-cross matter is smoothed for aye;
  The spirit sees straight and clear;
And heaven draws close that was far away,
  As you whistle off each fear.
Work, for the days are fleet and few.
    Don't dream, but do!

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You may worry over God's grinding Laws,
You may probe and probe for the great First
Cause;
But an hour of life with an honest thrill
Of self-forgetting joy
Will ease your mind of its moody ill
And make you blithe as a boy.
The plan is simple; then see it through:
Don't dream, but do!

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A RYME FOR CHRISTMAS

RYME for Christmas, ye good folk all,
A song for the time o' year
Make merry music in bower and hall,
With hey for a day of cheer!

But season the jest with a kindly deed,
And let love deepen the song.
In the outer ways there are hearts that bleed
And hands that labor long.

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As the yule-log burns and the gifts go round,
  As the indoor romps are high,
Oh, gentles, hark to the doleful sound
  Of the homeless 'neath the sky!

For how shall ye keep the Christmas-tide,
  Or cherish its Founder's name,
Unless that your hearts be open wide
  To His people's want and shame?

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PAIN

RIM-FACED fellow, silent guest
At Life's feast, what will'st with me?
With a great fear unexprest
At my heart, I follow thee;
Leave the lights, the laughter gay,
Heavy-hearted go away.

At the last, I thank thee, friend:
I am weaned from specious show
Of delight,—the banquet-end
Meant but surfeit: now I know
Real from seeming, and am trussed
For the May-be and the Must.

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CITY STREETS

I SAW a sad sight yesterday.
A girl, whose look was pale
And sullen-set, was led away
To serve her term in jail;

And as she walked, betwixt two men
Who vigilantly stepped,
Her better self came back,— and then,
Dear angels, how she wept!

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And yet, at eve I saw a sight
  Sadder an hundred fold:
Within a place of glaring light
  A woman, flushed and bold,

Lifted a glass of feignèd cheer,
  And as the drink she quaffed
She breathed a curse one would not hear,
  And looked to heaven — and laughed!

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MEMORIALS

BESIDE the shining river's brim,
By vital green of grasses spanned
And circled by the hills, that rim
The blue horizon's wonder-land,
The ruins of a dwelling rise
Pathetic to the evening skies.

Mounds, where a hearth fire once was bright;
And tumbled rails that girdled in
A garden with its blooms alight
And waving growths, their next-of-kin:
Above, a well sweep rising sheer
Out of the wreck of many a year.

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An eloquence of what is past
Broods like a ghost around the place;
The dreams that brick and stone outlast
Sit peering in each other's face;
Lo, every corner stone is ripe
With phantoms of forgotten life.

Here love was potent, work and play
Lifted twin voices clear and strong;
There is no other sound to-day
Save music of the river's song:
Across the crumbled years they call,
The well-sweep and the ruined wall.

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THE HOMING BIRD

THE soul is like a homing bird that's sure
To wing its way to the beloved place;
Above the sea or land, through air more pure
Than mortal breathes, it cleaves the tracts of space,
Steered by a yearning wonderful, elate
To reach the native loft, the lonesome mate.

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THEN

OU cannot understand, my little one,
Why tears of tenderness make blind my eyes,
In looking on your face that, like the sun,
Sheds gladness, like a morn of sweet sunrise.

Perplext, you touch me with a wondering hand;
Thank God, 'tis so,—for when long years are fled,—
Then will you know, remember, understand,—
Then, in the dream-like years when I am dead.

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CREED AND DEED

THE Rose, who reigns the queen of flowers,
Quoth to the Violet,
"One thing, come dear, come woful hours,
I never can forget."
"I prithee, make thy wisdom ours,"
Quoth modest Violet.

"There's naught that's like a clear-cut creed,"
The regal Rose replied;
"So pray your prayer, and bid your bead,
And keep the law beside."
"A goodly deed's a goodly deed,"
The modest Violet sighed.

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THE UNSPOKEN

OUR speech is but a surface foam; below
Broods the unspoken, and her caves are rife
With turbulent powers and passions, to and fro—
The veiled vitalities of under life.

We meet and part, we say and straight unsay,
Nor tell our mid-sea longings to our mates;
But all the while, deep down and put away,
The unsaid sways our fortunes and our fates.

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PRAYER TIDES

Matins

HE opal tints of dawn have come,
The winds upspring all frolicsome;
Ah, how may living lips be dumb?
So, Lord, this orison to Thee!

Nones

The heat and burden of the day
Beats down, the dews have slipt away;
There is no heart that seems to pray;
Let mine as one more faithful be.

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Vespers

The nun-like gray of evening-tide
Makes worshipful the heavens wide;
Anon comes night, the stilly-eyed;
The world's a-pause and prays with me.

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SANCTUARY

(Written for the Tenth Anniversary of the Library at Norfolk, Connecticut)

OF old the hunted wretch, if only he
Might tread the sacred steps and gain the shrine,
Was safe from hurt; the most high Gods would be
His bulwark, by their presences divine.

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Gasping, he threw himself against their knees
And felt the grace of their unshaken calm:
A seaman caught from Life's tumultuous seas,
A wounded body healed by magic balm.

* * * * * *

So, from the baffling storms, from hostile spears,
From strife and struggle that enmesh our day,
Behold the Sanctuary that the years
Make but more precious, and shall make alway.

A place of peace, an altar where the mind
Finds strength in prayer, a home and haven dear
Of souls, a senate-house of mortal kind
Become immortal — lo, the Gods are here!

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REVERY

Evening

DIM grows the wood; the amber evening tints
Merge into opal skies and stars just seen;
Down vistas gloomed and winding there are hints
Of elves and gnomes along the mosses green.

Midnight

A holy song the thrush has distant-sung;
The tree-tops murmur like some dreaming sea;
Hark! far away a silvern bell has rung
Twelve strokes, slow tolled, that faint and fade from me.

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Morning

A shaft of gold upon my upturned face
  As fleeting and as shy as any fawn;
Sweet odors, stirring winds and forms of grace;
  Now tell me, is this heaven, or is it dawn?

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THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER

HEN full of years, O God! and reckoned sage,
Companioned by the memories that enshrine
The Past: when Life has yellowed o'er the page
Of Youth, and, musing, I must needs repine
The loss of friends, that bitter sign of age,
White hairs, the silver sign:

Oh, may the Long Ago loom soft and fair,
Recalling, not the evil and the stress,
But tranquil hours, and gentle faces there,
Flashes of joy, and sacred tenderness;
A sense of peace along the evening air,—
Visions that charm and bless!

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TO A CHILD CRYING

THOU pretty one, why dost thou wail and plain
So piteously? Thou hast but lived a day
And surely thou and sorrow are not grown
To fellowship,— and yet, poor, tiny child,
Listening I seem to catch within thy cry
A bitter protest 'gainst a host of wrongs;
Methinks thou weepest, not for thy wee self,
But for mankind, untutored spokesman of
The universal ill; yea, presciently
Dost, though a babe, foretell to shallow souls
The depths, the tear-stained dramas of a world.

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SYMBOLS

A SIMPLE, tintless flower is the lily white;
But it symbols what is sweet and pure and right,
And it thrills to my very soul with love and light.

And a red bush, nothing more, is the Judas-tree;
But whenever it flaunts its sanguine blooms, to me
Comes a vision of Christ, and a dread of treachery.

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MEMORIES

S his yarn a seaman spins
With a twinkle in his eye,
Weaving wonders from the past
While his ship heaves o'er the brine;
So the memories that are mine
Tell their tale beside the mast
Of Life's bark, that bellies by
O'er Time's sea of songs and sins.

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THE REFORMER

A MAN once stood before a frowning wall
Whereon was writ a lie since ancient days,
And threw his heart's blood by the cupful straight
Against the legend, so to wipe it out,
Tapping his veins of all their purple yield
In his desire. At last he grew so weak
That, tottering-limbed, he heaved glazed eyes to heaven,
Sighed like a weary child, smiled once, and fell.

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And when his dust was mingled with the mould
That giveth birth to flowers, the people woke
One morn, and looked upon the wall, to see
A clean erasure of the glozing words
Had grieved the man so, he that calmly slept,
Oblivious alike of loves and lies
That make our human story.

Then there ran
A whisper, soon a cry, across the land:
"God urged him to the act, and he was glad
To spill his blood and make us clearer-eyed."
Whereat the very folk who carelessly
Passed by that day he drained his throbbing strength
And paled his flesh, upreared a cenotaph
And deified his name to after-times.

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HYMN FOR A TOWN

(Sung at the 250th Anniversary of the founding of Middletown, Conn.)

HERE the red man roved of yore
By a stately water-lane,
Lo, was sown a seed that bore
Hundred-fold of goodly grain;
Which the hardy pioneers
Harvested with blood and tears.

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Homely times were those, and grim,
By the green-rimmed river-side;
Oft with battle smoke were dim,
Where the stanch forefathers died;
But, with sounds of prayer and praise,
Came white peace and sweeter days.

Ships were built of sturdy frame,
And the marts with trade were rife;
Schools uprose in wisdom's name,
Churches hymned the higher life;
So the holdfast English race
Set God's seal upon the place.

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We have reaped what they have sown.
  Honored, down the streets we tread,
Carven clear in changeless stone,
  Be the memories of the dead;
For through them our town doth bide
Beautiful her stream beside.

Not to them alone, to Thee,
  God of elder years and ours,
Be the laud, for Thou canst see
  In the root the pledge of flowers;
Though man's ways be passing strange,
Yet Thy counsels do not change.

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City of our love and life,
  River-town of spreading trees,
Peaceful, after early strife,
  Prospered by the centuries,
Thou forever shalt endure,
If thy faith be firm and pure.

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OUR CITY OF AËRIAL LIGHT

(The Buffalo Fair)

IT loomed, in summer's morning hours,
A clustered Orient of towers;
And in the splendid blaze of noon
I gloried in its stately boon
Of colors, wandered in a trance
Past many a vision of romance.

But when the dark was come, behold!
It grew a magic burg of gold,
With soul released, above the night,
Our city of aërial light!

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While marble-girdled waters gleamed
  In mystic hues and tints undreamed,
A thousand thousand points of fire
  Blent in one heavenward, high desire.

O land we love, take heart of grace,
  For thou hast wrought this wonder-place!
O land of lands, be thine the same
  Pure aspiration of the flame!

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PLAY-ROOM POEMS

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I.

SNOW AND RAIN

TELL me (quoth Lilian) what is the snow?
"Up in the very highest heaven
Circle the great throne angels seven,
Nearest to God, you know.
While, inwoven their garments through,
Are pearls, pure gems of a saintly hue;
And, as the wide wings beat the air,
Away up there,
They shake white pearls on the earth below;
And that is the snow."

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"Tell me (quoth Lilian) what is the rain?"
"Up in the very highest heaven
Circle the great throne angels seven,
Nearest to God, again.
While, interwoven their garments through,
Flame great diamonds glad of hue,
And, as the wide wings rise and fall,
They scatter them all
Eastward, to catch on the way a stain;
And that is the rain."

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II.

THE WIND-BROOM

THE wind-broom sweeps so wondrous clean
That when you hear it up on high
Go swishing by, go swishing by,
You may be sure the sky-folk mean
To make their homes all fair to see,
Garnished, and gay as gay can be
O' nights, for starry company.

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III.

STAR SHIPS

THE stars are ships on a blue, cold sea,
Gold ships, that sail and sail;
They keep their course right steadily,
Unvexed by any gale.

For God their helmsman is, I trow;
In sea-craft of the air
So skilled, that all the winds that blow
Seem favoring and fair.

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